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A LIVABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR WILDLIFE IS QUALITY ENVIRONMENT FOR MAN

Montana Outdoors

Volume III—No. I | MONTANA FISH & GAME DEPARTMENT | January, 1969

FISH AND GAME PROPOSES LEGISLATION

The Montana Fish and Game Commission will submit a number of proposed bills to the 1969 legislature for their consideration. Following is a brief description of each proposed piece of legislation.

1. An act to provide that salmonid fish and eggs imported into Montana be free of certain diseases.

The salmonid fishes include our trout, salmon, and the chars (Dolly Varden and brook trout). At the present there is no law to prevent shipment of diseased fish or fish eggs either to state or federal agencies within Montana, or to private individuals. A number of diseases, transmitted by fish or by fish eggs, are extremely infectious to our most important game fish.

At present, one of the most dreaded diseases is called "Whirling Disease." The disease is caused by a single-celled, microscopic form of animal life which causes disintegration of the cartilage in a fish's head—cartilage which supports organs of equilibrium. Sometimes the spinal column is affected. Pressure on nerves which control pigment cells in the tail may cause the tail to turn black.

Infected fish swim in whirling motions when feeding or when startled. Rainbow and brook trout seem to be most susceptible. Coho, or silver salmon are also susceptible, and though brown trout do not show typical symptoms it is suspected that they may be carriers.

Gerry Atwell Photo

It is difficult for game workers to get much information on the age make-up of our grizzly bear population. Requirement that skulls be tagged would provide a source of such information.

Treatment of the disease in a hatchery is lengthy and involves destruction of all fish, draining of ponds, chemical treatment of ponds, and periods of drying.

2. An act to provide for the tagging of grizzly bear hides and skulls and giving the commission authority to create regulations necessary for the management and protection of a rare species.

Under our present laws, hunters are not required to use the meat of bears. The carcasses of grizzly bears are therefore nearly always left at the site of kill. Consequently, it is difficult for game workers to get much information as to the age makeup on our grizzly population. The age and sex ratio of grizzly bears annually harvested is important from the standpoint of managing this rare animal.

Game workers are now able to determine, within limits, the ages of grizzly bears by examining their skulls and teeth. A requirement that hunters have the skulls of their bears tagged would provide a very valuable source of management information on this wilderness monarch.

3. An act to prohibit harassing, driving or rallying game animals, game birds or fur-bearing animals with any self-propelled vehicle.

A law of this nature is felt appropriate in the light of the great variety of vehicles being mass-manufactured for both land and snow travel.

4. An act authorizing the state fish and game commission to designate certain areas as state parks, historical sites, monuments, or by such other designation as it deems appropriate, or to redesignate any area as designated, and to name or to change the name of areas as designated, and authorizing the commission to lease such areas as the commission deems to be in the best interests of the state.

When the state acquires a piece of land with outstanding recreational potential, there is a problem as to whether it should be designated as a state park, state monument, state fishing access site, or state recreation area. Presently, there are no good guidelines for the designation of such areas. Not only does this pose a problem to the Fish and Game Commission, but it leaves the public confused as to the relative importance of such areas.

5. An act to provide for a sportsman's identification license.

Approximately 60 percent of the game animals in Montana are found on private land. Consequently, if the Fish and Game Department is to provide recreational hunting they must continually work on landowner-recreationist relations. In the past five years an active program directed to landowner-recreationist relations has been set up in the seven Fish and Game administrative districts in Montana. This is a joint venture of the Montana Stockgrowers, various Montana sportsmen's associations and the Fish and Game Department. After five years of work the "3-C" teams, composed of a landowner, a recreationist, and a member of the Fish and Game Department, have obtained better cooperation and large acreages of private land have been opened to recreationists. However, it has become apparent that to adequately police vandalism, litter, and fire, the department must have more effective means of identifying the people using the fields and forests of the state. In addition, state fish and game wardens must be given the legal right to enforce vandalism, litter, and fire control laws on private lands.

When you come right down to it, a man in the field is pretty much of a free agent. Sure, he can be ordered off private property, but unless he's obviously damaged something, there's little else to be done. Even if he's carrying a fishing rod or some sort of weapon a Game Warden can't always check him. If he's obstinate or has something to hide he may not even give his name. Thus, the man out plinking rabbits, or walking the fields with a fishing rod essentially remains anonymous if he prefers to. Unfortunately, it appears that the ranks of this legion of the anonymous include individuals responsible for most of the outdoor vandalism.

Landowners, sportsmen, and stockmen in Montana have asked the Fish and Game Department to come up with some plan to discourage vandalism afield. It is felt that every step in this direction is a step toward better landowner-recreationist relationships. The Montana Fish and Game Commission has adopted a plan which would aim directly at the heart of the problem—identification of all weapon carriers and of fishermen afield. Their proposal which does not involve gun control in any way, has been submitted to the legislature for their consideration.

Basically, House Bill 102 would require that each person carrying uncased firearms or other weapons in the field, and each person purchasing hunting and fishing licenses have a sportsman's identification license upon his person. Exceptions would be provided for property owners while on their own land, for persons on land under their control and for children under 15 while fishing.

"Uncased" weapons would include those carried in a holster or open-end scabbard when on one's person, on a horse, motorcycle or snowmobile, but not in any other motor vehicle. Persons afield with an uncased weapon or while fishing would be required to show the identification cards to fish and game wardens or to other officers.

Identification licenses unfolded would be standard size of a business machine card, but they would fold to billfold size. A complete file by business machine could then be maintained on all ID holders, including holders of hunting and fishing licenses. Such a compilation is not possible under the state's present, rather complicated licensing system. Each ID license would contain some form of positive identification, such as the holder's driver's license number or his social security number. This would prevent the use of one's license by another person. The advantages of having such a large storehouse of information available by electronic business machines is obvious. In addition to enforcement agencies, the information would be of great advantage for auditing purposes and in applying for federal moneys available on a matching basis through various funds.

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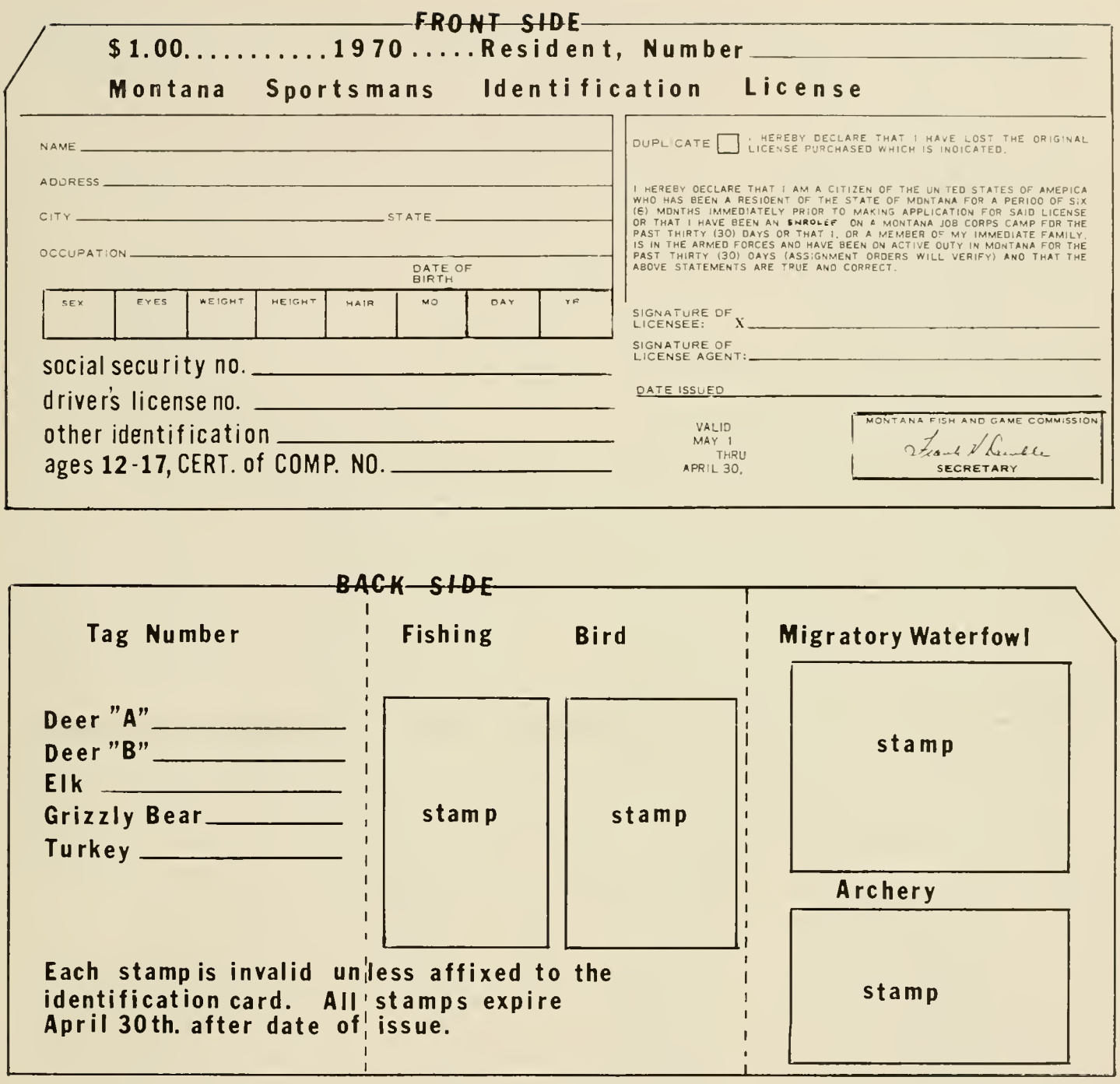
Edited by Vernon Craig


FRONT SIDE
$1.00.....1970.....Resident, Number
Montana Sportsmans Identification License
NAME
ADDRESS
CITY
STATE
OCCUPATION
DATE OF BIRTH
SEX
EYES
WEIGHT
HEIGHT
HAIR
MO
DAY
YR
social security no.
driver's license no.
other identification
ages 12-17, CERT. of COMP. NO.
DUPLICATE
I HEREBY DECLARE THAT I HAVE LOST THE ORIGINAL LICENSE PURCHASED WHICH IS INDICATED.
I HEREBY DECLARE THAT I AM A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA WHO HAS BEEN A RESIDENT OF THE STATE OF MONTANA FOR A PERIOD OF SIX (6) MONTHS IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO MAKING APPLICATION FOR SAID LICENSE OR THAT I HAVE BEEN AN ENROLLEE ON A MONTANA JOB CORPS CAMP FOR THE PAST THIRTY (30) DAYS OR THAT I, OR A MEMBER OF MY IMMEDIATE FAMILY, IS IN THE ARMED FORCES AND HAVE BEEN ON ACTIVE DUTY IN MONTANA FOR THE PAST THIRTY (30) DAYS (ASSIGNMENT ORDERS WILL VERIFY) AND THAT THE ABOVE STATEMENTS ARE TRUE AND CORRECT.
SIGNATURE OF LICENSEE: X
SIGNATURE OF LICENSE AGENT:
DATE ISSUED
VALID MAY 1 THRU APRIL 30,
MONTANA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION
SECRETARY
BACK SIDE
Tag Number
Deer "A"
Deer "B"
Elk
Grizzly Bear
Turkey
Fishing
stamp
Bird
stamp
Migratory Waterfowl
stamp
Archery
stamp
Each stamp is invalid unless affixed to the identification card. All stamps expire April 30th. after date of issue.

The proposed Sportsman's Identification License—Top shows front of proposed license. The bottom drawing shows the back side.

It is proposed that hunting and fishing licenses be issued as stamps to be pasted on the backs of identification licenses. This would not only lower printing costs of multiple types of hunting and fishing licenses, but would relieve license agents of carrying such a variety of licenses. It would make license agents accountable for an exact sum of money, thus eliminating license fee errors. Game tags would still be provided for big game species, but these too would be simplified. At the time of issue, license agents would write in the ID number of the purchaser and add all other information but the date of kill. Hunters then would have only to cut out the dates on their tags at the proper time.

The ID license with some form of positive identification would materially cut down on nonresidents falsely obtaining resident licenses. Among the many advantages of a Sportsman's Identification License, the prevention of vandalism would be paramount.

6. **An act to provide the commission authority to contract construction under $10,000 and to construct projects of less than $1,000 without contract and other requirement.**

There are many instances in which the Fish and Game Commission could get construction jobs done considerably cheaper and faster were they able to take advantage of equipment and man-

power temporarily available on jobs near the proposed construction sites. Hauling in equipment to do small jobs is sometimes more costly than the construction itself. In fact, contractors are often unwilling to bid on small jobs beyond their immediate areas of operation. Considering the great number of construction programs that come under the Recreation and Parks alone, the need to call for bids on small contracts complicates getting the job done.

7. **An act to provide the commission with authority to amend, regulate or abandon Sun River Game Preserve, Flathead Preserve and Teton Spring Creek Preserve—same authority as other preserves.**

Many years ago, during the infancy of game management, there was a critical shortage of big game animals over most of Montana. At that time game workers felt it necessary to set aside areas for big game species where they would be free from all hunting pressure and could propagate undisturbed.

State game preserves have for the most part long since outgrown their purpose. In fact, many have become chronic trouble spots. Not only do they provide a sanctuary where game animals retreat during the hunting season, thus interfering with a proper harvest of game, but they concentrate hunting on other, nearby segments of game herds which remain outside the preserves. A third, and very unpalatable condition which is agitated by game preserves is the creation of a "firing line" type of hunting. This situation becomes even more acute when severe snow or weather conditions finally force elk, en-masse, out of their sanctuaries into comparatively small areas.

8. **An act to provide the commission authority to purchase land on long-term contract.**

When the Fish and Game Commission purchases a piece of land for fishing access, game range, or other reasons, the total purchase price must be paid within a two-year period or less. On large purchases, however, sellers nearly always want payments spread over a longer period of time; primarily for tax reasons. Consequently, the Fish and Game Commission is often unable to buy prime game range or recreation areas because they are not able to spread payment beyond a two-year period or must pay a premium to "make up" for the tax loss to the seller.

The above act would allow the commission to enter into a long-term contract without encumbering the state or future commissions beyond the current biennium. In essence, the total cost would be obligated and held for distribution much the same as if it were in escrow.

9. **An act to change the name of the State Fish and Game Commission to 'State Fish, Game and Parks Commission' and to change the title of the State Fish and Game Director to 'State Fish, Game and Parks Director."**

It is felt that the new titles would better describe responsibities of the Fish and Game Commission and Director.

10. **An act to amend the license agent law to provide that a license agent may only sell hunting and fishing licenses from one business location.**

This act would prohibit chain stores from distributing licenses to other stores across the state. This practice currently causes considerable administrative problems. It also allows additional license agents to establish themselves in areas which already have adequate licensing service.

11. **An act to amend Section 26-202.2 to provide for such tagging of game animals that the commission may prescribe.**

From a legal standpoint, this would better define tagging requirements for big game animals and would provide for a change in the physical makeup of game tags. This change in game tags would be necessary in effecting the proposed sportsman's identification license.

12. **An act to amend Section 26-204 to prohibit false statement for any license including identification license.**

This act would be aimed at preventing people from fraudulently obtaining sportsman's identification licenses, if the identification license proposal is adopted.

13. **An act to provide for a one-day nonresident fishing license.**

A large number of tourists who pass through Montana each year would very much like to try their hand, only for an hour or two, at fishing in some of our nationally famous trout streams. The less avid fishermen, however, feel they cannot afford a $5.00 license for an hour or two of fishing. The one-day license would allow these tourists to fish for an hour or two and may persuade them to spend a little more time in our state. Such licenses are offered in several states.

14. **An act to appropriate $25,000 for a state-wide comprehensive plan for the preservation of historic sites.**

The national act for the preservation of historic sites provides for Grants-In-Aid to states and local sub-divisions of the state for acquisition and preservation of historic sites.

In order to participate under this act and receive federal funds for these purposes, a comprehensive statewide plan for the preservation of historic sites must be written and approved by the Secretary of Interior.

Matching funds on a 50-50 ratio are available on a limited basis to help finance the planning process.

The state matching funds are necessary to do the plan and thereby make the program available in Montana.

Moose in Montana

By Philip Schladweiler

Gerry Atwell Photo

The Shiras or Wyoming moose (Alces alces shirasi), although the smallest sub-species of moose, is Montana's largest big game animal. It is found throughout the mountains of southwest Alberta, southeast British Columbia, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming and Utah, with occasional records from Colorado.

Information on the status of moose in Montana during the fur trade and early settlement days is scarce. As one might expect, the Lewis and Clark expedition was the first to encounter and record the presence of moose in present day Montana. Although neither Lewis nor Clark personally encountered the moose, two of the party (Ordway and Whitehouse) reported in their independent diaries that a party of hunters "saw some mooce Deer which was much larger than the common deer," a few miles above the mouth of the Milk River on May 10, 1805. While camped on Lander's Fork northeast of Lincoln on July 7, 1806, Lewis recorded that

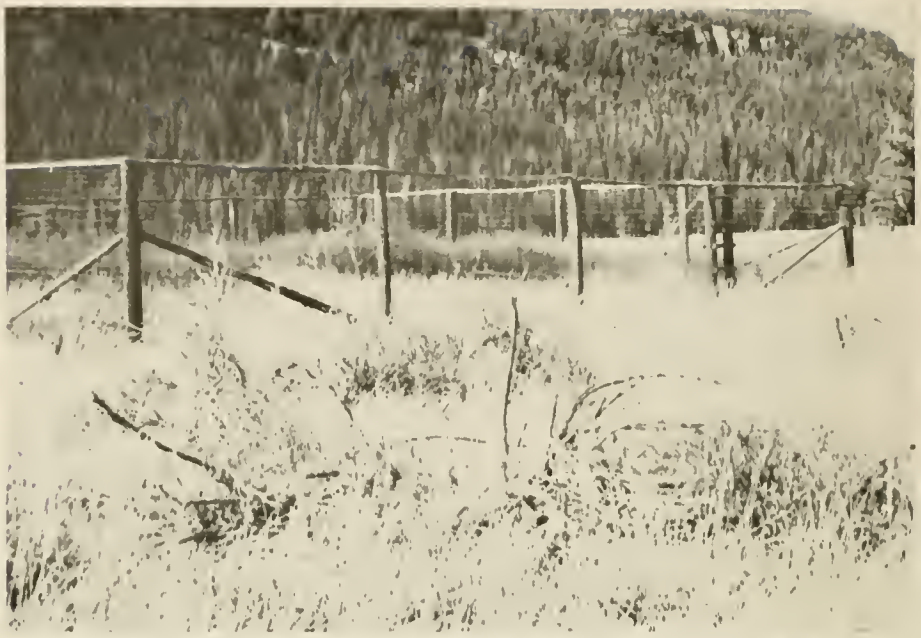
"Reuben Fields wounded a moos deer this morning near our camp." Similar reports are occasionally found in the journals of other explorers and trappers. Another early account tells of a moose being killed near the confluence of the Milk and Missouri rivers in 1832.

The first chronicled trip to the head of the Yellowstone River in 1869 reported a moose at the mouth of Meadow Creek, on the East Gallatin River. The following account appears in a War Department report of a military expedition to Yellowstone National Park made in the summer of 1875:

"This species is quite aboundant in suitable localities in the Yellowstone Park, although, like all the larger game, it has been driven away from the neighborhood of the trail by the constant passage of travelers. We saw signs of its presence in the Bridger Mountains, and were told that there was a famous country for moose about fifteen miles from the mouth of Trail Creek."

Moose were given legal protection in 1872 with a closed season from February 1 to August 15 each year. Complete, year-round protection was given in 1897. In this same year the estimated population within Yellowstone National Park was 50 head. Between 1908 and 1910, George Shiras III (for whom the Yellowstone moose was named in 1914) studied the moose in Yellowstone National Park and estimated 1,500 moose in the area. Most observers feel this estimate to be high.

The estimate for Montana in 1910 was 300, the largest herd being in Ross Fork of Rock Creek in Granite county, while the official Yellowstone Park estimate for 1912 was only 550. From his own experience in the area, noted naturalists Dr. Vernon Bailey felt that Shiras' estimate was more accurate than others from this period because of his familiarity with both the animal and the region. The park moose population apparently stabilized between 1925 and 1930, with estimates of 575, 675, 600, and 702 for the years 1926, 1929, 1933, and 1937 respectively. Areas outside the park showed similar population growth. A guide who later became a forest ranger in what is now the Absaroka Primitive Area stated that it was rare to see moose in that area during the 1907-1915 period. The Forest Service estimated only 25 head on the entire Absaroka National Forest in 1921. This number had increased to an estimated 308 head in 1936. Noticeable increases occurred in many other areas of Montana at about this same time, especially in the Gallatin and Granite county's Rock Creek.



Slough Creek exclosure in the Absaroka Mountains was erected in 1960. The photograph of the exclosure was taken in 1965. Willow recovery inside the exclosure is obvious, while willows outside the exclosure are dead or closely grazed.

Moose damage to vegetation was apparent in the Absaroka's by 1935. The Absaroka Winter Game Studies conducted by the Forest Service in the winter of 1935-36 gives some insight into the populations and forage conditions at that time. In Slough Creek they found:

"A large percent of the willows in the meadows were dead, largely due to drought conditions coupled with heavy grazing and probably some frost kill. In Lake Abundance Creek some of the willow parks contained about 75 percent dead willows. This, of course, cut heavily into the moose forage causing a pretty general migration up on the slopes."

They found the Hellroaring area to be "one of the most seriously overgrazed areas encountered during the winter."

At that time ". . . willow meadows, which in the past have furnished a great amount of feed, are now of little value. A high percentage of the willows are dead and the rest have been closely grazed. As a result, the moose have had to migrate upward to browse on the higher slopes."

This study estimated 80 moose in Buffalo Fork, 43 in Hellroaring and 60 in the lower parts of Slough Creek. Upper Slough Creek, Wounded Man Creek, etc., were not studied due to the lack of cabins. Despite the recognition of a deteriorating range, no recommendation was made for removal of animals.

In addition to the Absaroka area, the 1941 biennial report indicated moose concentrations in the Flathead, Bitterroot, Bighole, Ruby, Madison and Gallatin river drainages. Many smaller, apparently isolated, populations were also recognized.

Montana's first positive approach to moose management occurred in the summer of 1942, when the Fish and Game Department conducted a moose survey in the Absaroka area with the objective of deriving a management plan for moose. A recommendation for a limited permit harvest resulted. The legislature enacted legislation enabling the Fish and Game Commission to set moose seasons in 1945. Montana experienced its first moose hunting season in nearly 50 years in the fall of 1945, with 90 bull-only permits issued; 40 in the Absaroka area, 30 in the Gallatin and 20 in the Bighole drainage. With added knowl-

edge of populations, distribution and the habitat requirements of the moose, permit quotas have been increased over the years so that 600 to 700 either-sex permits are now being issued annually. This has resulted in a yearly harvest of 400 to 500 animals with a hunter success of about 70 percent annually. With additional knowledge gained from studies presently being conducted, it should be possible to increase permit quotas in some hunting districts or portions of districts. This has been accomplished in some areas by making hunting districts smaller in order to obtain a better distribution of the hunter harvest. Further steps in this direction will probably be taken in the future. All in all, the future looks bright for both the moose and the moose hunter in Montana.

During 1910 it was estimated that there were 300 moose in Montana. Now, we harvest 400 to 500 annually. Photo by Gerry Atwell

COMPETITION FOR TROPHY HEADS KEENER

The Boone and Crockett Club has published a set of instructions for persons who want to enter trophies for record or competition of North American big game taken during the 1968 season. Minimum scores needed to place trophies have been generally upped, making competition keener than ever. Minimum scores as compared to those five years ago, 1963, have increased for black bear from 19 to 21, for grizzly bear from 23 to 24, for typical mule deer from 185 to 195, for typical whitetail from 160 to 170, for goats from 49 to 50, for moose from 150 to 155, for antelope from 80 to 82, for sheep from 175 to 180, and for elk from 360 to 365.

Forms are available from the Fish and Game Department for persons who want to try their hand at measuring a head or skull to see if it comes near the minimum scores needed to compete nationally. Official measuring, however, must be done by persons designated as "official measures" by the Boone and Crockett Club. A listing of official measures may be obtained from the Boone and Crockett Club, c/o Carnegie Museum, 4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, Penna., 15213.

Some rules that must be complied with include:

1. Trophies must have been taken within the territorial limits of North America. For Record-keeping purposes of North American big game, the Boone and Crockett Club has designated the southern boundary of Mexico as the southwest boundary of North America.

2. They must meet the new minimum scores dated 1968.

3. They must be taken in Fair Chase. The Revised Fair Chase Statement must be signed by hunter and accompany each entry.

4. Each entry postmarked August 15, 1968, and thereafter, must be accompanied by a ten dollar ($10.00) check or money order made payable to the Boone and Crockett Club and sent to the Records of North American Big Game Committee, c/o Carnegie Museum, 4400 Forbes Avenue Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 15213.

Please submit photographs showing front and side views or trophy with chart.

For cat and bear entries skull pictures only are requested.

Entries received in 1968, 1969 and 1970 will be judged together; Pictorial Brochure of award-winning trophies will be published in the spring of 1971.

TENTATIVE GAME REGULATIONS, 1969

Deer, elk, and bear regulations for the 1969 hunting season have been tentatively set by the Montana Fish and Game Commission. Final adoption of the regulations will be in February, after sports groups, stockmen and other cooperators have had a chance to look over the tentative proposals.

The commission departed from the general statewide deer and elk opener of the general season by splitting opening dates between western mountainous areas and the remainder of the state. Western areas, lying roughly west of a line from Red Lodge to Choteau, will open to general deer and elk hunting Oct. 19 and close Nov. 30. The remainder of the state is slated for an Oct. 26 opening.

The Bob Marshall, upper Blackfoot, and Absaroka hunting districts which traditionally open early are again scheduled for hunting beginning Sept. 15.

Other departures from past years is the opening of a deer and "bugler season" on bull elk in portions of southwestern Montana beginning Sept. 21. This early deer and bull elk season would close Sept. 30 and reopen again with the regular season.

Parts of west central Montana, primarily the Bitterroot and Superior areas, have been considered for an early opening on deer and elk beginning Sept. 27.

Archery

A statewide archery only season has been scheduled for deer from Sept. 21 through Oct. 12. Several areas will also be open for elk hunting by archers only from Sept. 21 through Oct. 12. The elk

archery areas will be essentially the same as during the 1968 hunting season.

Bear

The black bear season will again open on March 15, and hunting will close on this species Nov. 30. Nonresident black bear only licenses will be offered at $35.00 each. These licenses will be valid from March 15 through Aug. 31.

Seasons for grizzly bear will begin with deer or elk seasons and will close Nov. 30.

SMITH RIVER JOINS NETWORK OF RECREATIONAL WATERWAYS

The Montana Fish and Game Commission has tentatively designated the Smith River as a State Recreational Waterway. The Smith River headwaters are near White Sulphur Springs, and the river joins the Missouri south of Great Falls.

Because of the rugged inaccessible nature of the Smith River Canyon, the stream has retained much of its wilderness-like beauty. The beauty and fine fishing there offers an outstanding recreational potential for Montanans and their visitors.

The Smith River will join the recreational waterway family which also includes the wild portion of the Missouri River, the Upper Yellowstone River, the Flathead River above Flathead Lake and the three forks of the Flathead, and Rock Creek near Missoula.

The waterway system is being developed to accomplish three major goals:

1. The first goal is to maintain Montana's better streams as free flowing, productive waters, and to improve their quality and recreational potential wherever possible.

2. The second goal is eventual improvement of somewhat less than prime streams so they would eventually be of the quality which would make them desirable for placement in the system.

3. The third goal is to develop the recreational waterways in a manner that will encourage and obtain optimum recreational use by Montanans and their guests.

High quality fishing is an outstanding feature of Montana's streams and optimum multiple recreational use necessarily involves other uses which are compatible with and non-detrimental to stream fishing.

MONTANA FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

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